

CLAIMS:

1. A transaction management system for managing the purchase of a product or service by a buyer from a seller, the system comprising:

5 a data store for storing seller data comprising, for each of a plurality of sellers, a seller identifier; a program store storing processor implementable instructions; and

a processor coupled to the data store and to the program store for implementing the stored instructions, wherein the stored instructions comprise instructions for controlling the processor to implement a seller interface to receive seller offer data from a seller, the seller offer data including an availability record  
10 for a product or service offered for sale, the availability record defining a plurality of periods of conditional availability, each period of conditional availability having an associated set of conditions under which the product or service is or is not available.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the data store is further for storing the seller offer data received  
15 from a plurality of sellers by the seller interface.

3. The system of claim 1 or 2, wherein availability of the product or service during the periods of conditional availability is dependent on data internal or external to the system.

20 4. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the seller interface is further implemented to receive a plurality of sets of conditions from a seller, each set of conditions comprising an availability rule.

5. The system of claim 4, wherein the data store is further for storing the availability rules received from a seller by the seller interface.

25 6. The system of claim 5, wherein the data store is further for storing a plurality of predefined availability rules.

7. The system of any one of claims 4 to 6, wherein the seller interface is implemented to facilitate  
30 construction of the availability record for a product or service by receiving periods of conditional availability associated with availability rules from the seller.

8. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a buyer  
35 purchasing at least one linked product or service.

9. The system of claim 8, wherein the at least one linked product or service is offered for sale by at least one different seller, and wherein the seller interface is further implemented to notify the at least one different seller that the products or services have been linked.

10. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on at least one linked product or service being available to the seller.

5 11. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a purchase comprising less than a defined amount of the period of conditional availability.

10 12. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a purchase comprising more than a defined amount of the period of conditional availability.

15 13. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a linked product or service not being purchased for the period of conditional availability.

14. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on the seller's revenue or profit in a preceding timeframe.

20 15. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a travel distance associated with the buyer from a preceding buyer location.

25 16. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a travel distance associated with the buyer from a current location of the seller.

30 17. The system of claim 16, wherein the system is arranged to determine the current location of the seller based on signals received from a global positioning system device or a cellular telephone device.

18. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a defined reduction in the availability of products or services in a defined market.

35 19. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a defined rise in the price of products or services in a defined market.

20. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on the seller having sold a defined number or value of linked goods or services by a defined time before the period of conditional availability begins.

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21. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a linked product or service being unsold at a defined time before the period of conditional availability begins, the linked product or service being a larger quantity of the product or service offered for sale.

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22. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a defined increase or decrease in the price of the product or service.

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23. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the availability record for a product or service further defines a plurality of periods of unconditional availability or unconditional unavailability.

24. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the seller interface is implemented across the Internet.

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25. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the seller interface is implemented across a cellular telephone network.

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26. The system of claim 25, wherein the availability record is based on text messaging such as the SMS system received by the seller interface across the cellular telephone network.

27. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the stored instructions further comprise instructions for controlling the processor to implement a buyer interface to:

30 receive a purchase enquiry from a buyer, the purchase enquiry including a required period of availability for a product or service;

output seller offer data for a plurality of sellers able to provide the product or service for the required period of availability; and

receive a purchase request from the buyer accepting an offer.

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28. The system of claim 27, wherein the buyer interface is implemented to only output seller offer data for products or services that are conditionally available if the associated set of conditions are met.

29. The system of claim 28, wherein the system is arranged to determine whether the set of conditions are met at a predetermined time before the associated period of conditional availability.

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30. The system of claim 28, wherein the system is arranged to determine whether the set of conditions are met when a purchase enquiry for the products or services is received from a buyer.

31. The system of any one of claim 27 to 30, wherein the buyer interface is implemented over the  
5 Internet.

32. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the seller interface is further implemented to indicate the current availability of the seller's products or services during periods of conditional availability.

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33. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the seller interface is further implemented to indicate the potential availability of the seller's products or service during periods of hypothetical conditional availability.

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34. The system of claim 32 or 33, wherein the seller interface is further implemented to indicate the availability of other sellers' products or services.

35. The system of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the system is for managing the purchase of products or services by one buyer from a plurality of sellers.

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36. A method for managing the purchase of a product or service by a buyer from a seller, the method comprising:

storing in a data store storing seller data comprising, for each of a plurality of sellers, a seller identifier; and

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implementing a seller interface to receive seller offer data from a seller, the seller offer data including an availability record for a product or service offered for sale, the availability record defining a plurality of periods of conditional availability, each period of conditional availability having an associated set of conditions under which the product or service is or is not available.

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37. The method of claim 36, further comprising storing in the data store the seller offer data received from a plurality of sellers by the seller interface.

38. The method of claim 36 or 37, wherein availability of the product or service during the periods of conditional availability is dependent on data internal or external to the system.

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39. The method of any one of claims 36 to 38, wherein the seller interface is further implemented to receive a plurality of sets of conditions from a seller, each set of conditions comprising an availability rule.

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40. The method of claim 39, further comprising storing in the data store the availability rules received from a seller by the seller interface.

41. The method of claim 40, further comprising storing in the data store a plurality of predefined availability rules.

5 42. The method of any one of claims 39 to 41, wherein the seller interface is implemented to facilitate construction of the availability record for a product or service by receiving periods of conditional availability associated with availability rules from the seller.

10 43. The method of any one of claims 36 to 42, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a buyer purchasing at least one linked product or service.

15 44. The method of claim 43, wherein the at least one linked product or service is offered for sale by at least one different seller, and wherein the seller interface is further implemented to notify the at least one different seller that the products or services have been linked.

20 45. The method of any one of claims 36 to 44, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on at least one linked product or service being available to the seller.

46. The method of any one of claims 36 to 45, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a purchase comprising less than a defined amount of the period of conditional availability.

25 47. The method of any one of claims 36 to 46, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a purchase comprising more than a defined amount of the period of conditional availability.

30 48. The method of any one of claims 36 to 47, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a linked product or service not being purchased for the period of conditional availability.

35 49. The method of any one of claims 36 to 48, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on the seller's revenue or profit in a preceding timeframe.

50. The method of any one of claims 36 to 49, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a travel distance associated with the buyer from a preceding buyer location.

51. The method of any one of claims 36 to 50, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a travel distance associated with the buyer from a current location of the seller.

5 52. The method of claim 51, wherein the system is arranged to determine the current location of the seller based on signals received from a global positioning system device or a cellular telephone device.

53. The method of any one of claims 36 to 52, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a defined reduction 10 in the availability of products or services in a defined market.

54. The method of any one of claims 36 to 53, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a defined rise in the price of products or services in a defined market.

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55. The method of any one of claims 36 to 54, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on the seller having sold a defined number or value of linked goods or services by a defined time before the period of conditional availability begins.

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56. The method of any one of claims 36 to 55, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a linked product or service being unsold at a defined time before the period of conditional availability begins, the linked product or service being a larger quantity of the product or service offered for sale.

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57. The method of any one of claims 36 to 56, wherein the availability record for a product or service defines that availability in at least one period of conditional availability is dependent on a defined increase or decrease in the price of the product or service.

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58. The method of any one of claims 36 to 57, wherein the availability record for a product or service further defines a plurality of periods of unconditional availability or unconditional unavailability.

59. The method of any one of claims 36 to 58, wherein the seller interface is implemented across the Internet.

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60. The method of any one of claims 36 to 59, wherein the seller interface is implemented across the cellular telephone network.

40 61. The method of claim 60, wherein the availability record is based on SMS text messages received by the seller interface across a cellular telephone network.

62. The method of any one of claims 36 to 61, further comprising implementing a buyer interface to: receive a purchase enquiry from a buyer, the purchase enquiry including a required period of availability for a product or service;

5 output seller offer data for a plurality of sellers able to provide the product or service for the required period of availability; and receive a purchase request from the buyer accepting an offer.

63. The method of claim 62, wherein the buyer interface is implemented to only output seller offer data 10 for products or services that are conditionally available if the associated set of conditions are met.

64. The method of claim 63, wherein whether the set of conditions are met is determined at a predetermined time before the associated period of conditional availability.

15 65. The method of claim 63, wherein whether the set of conditions are met is determined when a purchase enquiry for the products or services is received from a buyer.

66. The method of any one of claim 62 to 65, wherein the buyer interface is implemented over the Internet.

20 67. The method of any one of claims 36 to 66, wherein the seller interface is further implemented to indicate the current availability of the seller's products or services during periods of conditional availability.

25 68. The method of any one of claims 36 to 66, wherein the seller interface is further implemented to indicate the potential availability of the seller's products or service during periods of hypothetical conditional availability.

69. The method of claim 67 or 68, wherein the seller interface is further implemented to indicate the availability of other sellers' products or services.

30 70. The method of any one of claims 36 to 69, wherein the method is for managing the purchase of products or services by one buyer from a plurality of sellers.

71. A computer software product arranged to cause a computer to execute the method of any one of 35 claims 37 to 70.

72. A computer readable recording medium having encoded thereon at least one program for performing the method of any one of claims 37 to 70.